

## SENATE 19 Self-made candidates vie for seat

BY KEITH EDWARDS

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The race for state Senate District 19 pits incumbent Sen. Paula Benoit, of Phippsburg, against challenger Seth Goodall, chairman of the Richmond Board of Selectmen.

Both candidates describe themselves as self-made individuals who represent the kind of change needed in state government.

Benoit said she's a moderate Republican who would help balance what she describes as the financial stress Democratic control of the Legislature has brought to the state.

"I think I add a nice balance to the table, a moderate perspective," Benoit said. "I've had to find my own way and be independent and I think that, in order to create a state where people can take pride in hard work and take responsibility for their actions and find satisfaction in that, people like me are needed in Augusta.

"I'm not a fighter. I don't engage in the push and shove of politics. I try to stay to the facts, be honest at all times, and speak to issues as I see them."

Goodall, a Democrat, said a new brand of leadership is needed in Maine.

"We need new leadership that is really willing to be a visionary one that can put Maine on the right track through wise investments, tightening the belt around spending, trying to do more for less, and a series of reforms," Goodall said. "We're very dependent on the older policies that have in fact slowed us down.

"I have a history of getting things done. I believe if we're going to get things done at the state level, we need people that see an issue, understand the issue, and really work hard to get it accomplished."

Goodall said he started a lawn mowing business with his brother when he was 12. That business grew into a major landscaping business that his brother still runs. Goodall, who is married to LeAnn Greenleaf, went to law school and became a lawyer; he was elected as a selectman in Richmond in 2007.

Benoit, former owner of a gift store, was elected to the state Senate in 2006 and was a small-business owner for 30 years.

She and her husband, Joe, have three grown children.

Senate District 19 includes the Sagadahoc County municipalities of Richmond, Bowdoinham, Arrowsic, Bath, Bowdoin, Georgetown, Phippsburg, Topsham, West Bath, Woolwich and Perkins Township, as well as Dresden in Lincoln County.

Both candidates said Maine needs to streamline its economic development systems, to make it easier for businesses to locate or expand in Maine.

Both said the state should have a "one-stop shopping," approach, in which business owners or potential business owners would have one place or person to go to learn about rules, regulations and what help is available to them.

Goodall said the state should make more research and development investments.

"As a state, if you look at our borrowing load for R and D investments, we're much lower in comparison to other states," Goodall said. "I think with those wise investments, and by tightening our belt in other areas, we can make great economic strides. I believe good government can really help spur economic development. I'm not talking about an overburdening government being invasive. I'm talking about playing a role and helping be a facilitator."

Benoit said the state doesn't need to add economic development programs, but does need to do a better job communicating about what it already has.

"There are people that live right here that would love to open their own business," Benoit said. "They've been laid off from a company or the mill has closed and they want to try something new. It is so difficult to do that. But it doesn't have to be, because we have so many things available already. It's amazing what our state offers. But, once again, the communication isn't there."

Benoit said the state should make changes to its public assistance programs, to help people become independent.

She said currently people who might otherwise take a part-time job now, may not, out of concern that if they make money on their own they could lose their public assistance. She suggested a system in which people working to get off public assistance continue to get some financial help when they first start working, so they won't be penalized for working to become more independent.

"If they're willing to go out and work and bring in some money to support themselves, we should have a tiered program that would allow them to take some responsibility, but don't cut them off so they're left hanging there."

Goodall said he and Benoit agree Maine needs people who are independent, not dependent upon the system.

But he said economic development and education must come first, otherwise people could become more dependent, not less, on state programs.

"Now, how do we get people independent?" he said. "To get people independent, it's education, it's families investing in education, it's having people going to school ready to learn, and to continually learn life skills. I believe Maine wants to get off this cycle of the cyclical down- and up-turns of our budget. We need to improve wages, put out a stronger workforce."

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